

Jan Cortez, program director for the San Diego-Imperial County branch of the American Lung Association, voiced concern that the drop in ozone pollution may cause people to overlook the danger of ultra-fine particulate matter—from diesel exhaust and various types of combustion—that the federal Environmental Protection Agency is seeking to regulate.

“The report doesn't even mention particulate air pollution, so it is giving the public only part of the picture,” she said. The public is still breathing particulate pollution, she said, and it contributes to asthma attacks and increased visits to the hospital.”

The smog decline has not come without a price. The estimated \$4 billion cost to retool refineries was considered an important factor in the steep rise in gasoline prices last spring and early summer.

Many motorists still wonder how much the less-volatile fuel has reduced their gas mileage, although state spokesmen estimate the penalty at 1 to 3 percent. Averaging three-year periods, which minimizes the influence of weather, the number of days of ozone pollution in San Diego County under the state standard declined 55 percent between 1979–1981 and 1994–1996.

LEGISLATION TO MOVE THE 4.3-CENT GAS TAX INTO THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

HON. STEVE C. LATOURETTE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 10, 1997

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, today I am reintroducing legislation to move the 4.3-cent gas tax from the general fund to the highway trust fund.

The 4.3-cent gas tax, which was enacted in 1993, currently pumps an estimated \$6 billion annually into the general fund. This is wrong, plain and simple. Motorists should benefit from a fee which they alone must pay.

While no one enjoys paying gas taxes, many studies have shown that Americans are much more willing to pay gas taxes if they are used only to make our country's roads and bridges safer. This, unfortunately, has not been the case with the most recent 4.3-cent increase. Last Congress, when many had talked about repealing the 4.3, I studied the various ways to use the funds generated by the gas tax, trying to come up with a common-sense, useful proposal.

My legislation will not add one dime to the deficit, and instead will force the Federal Government to be honest with taxpayers and use the gas tax for needed infrastructure improvements.

For example, a recent study found that bridges throughout the State are badly deteriorating and in need of repair. At the local level,

last year we experienced a frustrating and costly detour on Interstate 90 after the bridge over the Grand River shifted about 2 inches. Fortunately, workers from the Ohio Department of Transportation worked tirelessly to repair what could have been a perilous situation, and tried to minimize the inconvenience to motorists.

It seems to me that if Government has a function it should be to make sure our Nation's roads and bridges are as safe as humanly possible. When you put your children in your car, you need to be assured that the bridge you travel over won't crumble, drop a few inches or collapse.

Under my new bill, the 4.3-cent gas tax would be transferred from the general fund to the highway trust fund. As a result, \$6 billion a year would be freed up for infrastructure improvements, and 20 percent of those funds would be earmarked for mass transit projects. This will come as welcome news for our cities that are struggling to meet the increasing demand for mass transit. Also, under this proposal we will not have to search for a way to offset the \$6 billion a year in lost revenues. We will simply be transferring funds from one account to another, meaning it will be budget neutral.

Ohio is not alone when it comes to needing road, bridge and infrastructure improvements. Studies show that we should be spending \$60 billion per year on our highways but are only spending \$6 billion. This is a national problem, and one that could be greatly eased if we simply leveled with the taxpayers and used the gas tax for the purpose it was intended.